Fisheries and Oceans Canada | Pêches et Océans Canada

AMERICAN PLAICE

Consultations on listing under the *Species at Risk Act*

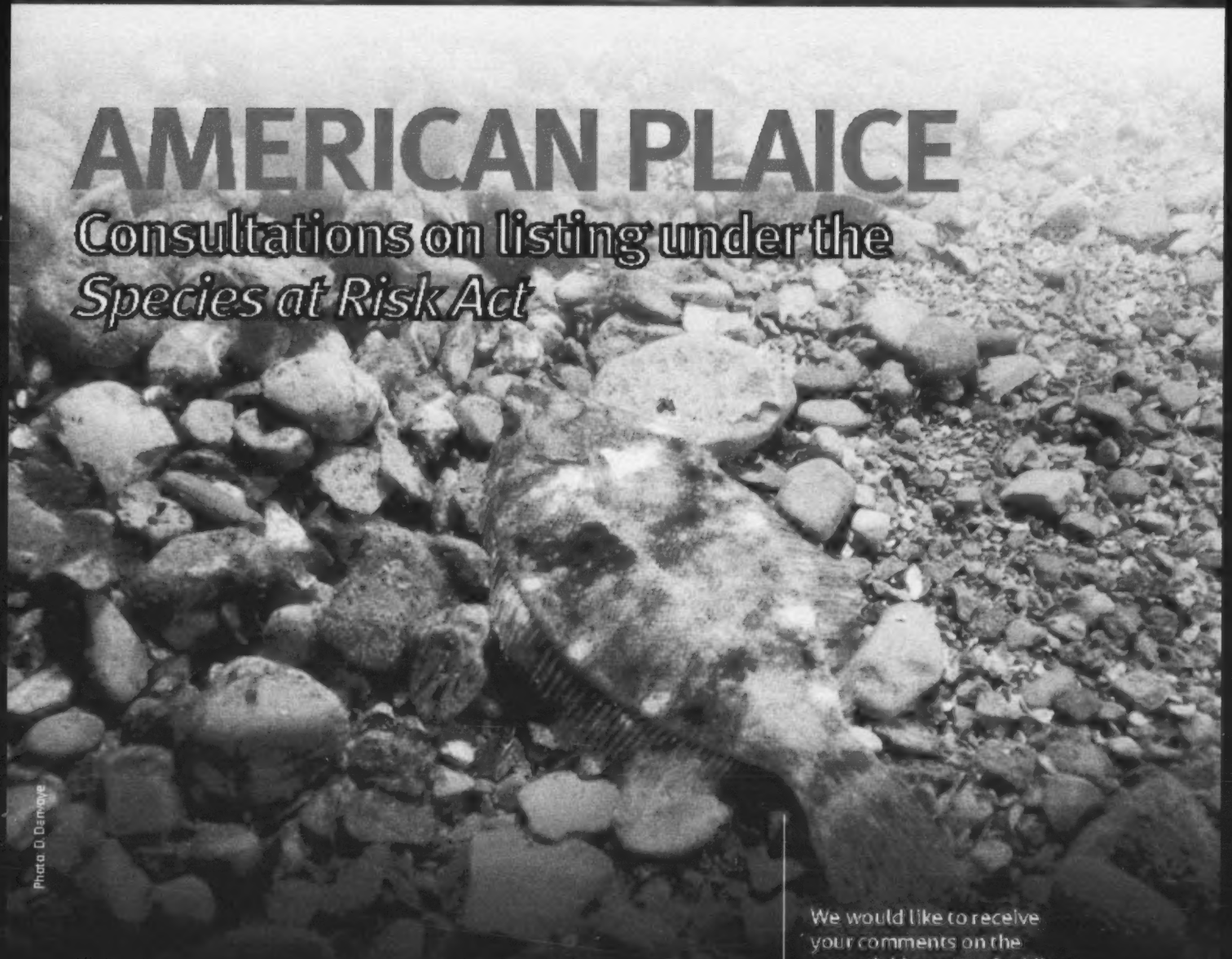


Photo: D. Dempsey

Information summary and questionnaire for the consultations on adding two American Plaice populations to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk

November 1, 2013 to January 31, 2014

Populations:
- Maritime
- Newfoundland and Labrador

We would like to receive your comments on the potential impacts of adding two populations of American Plaice to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk.

Your comments are important.

Please fill out the questionnaire: we want to hear from you.

Canada

CONSULTATIONS
Let your opinion be heard

The *Species at Risk Act* acknowledges that all Canadians have a role to play in preventing the disappearance of wildlife species.

Before deciding whether any of these American Plaice populations will be added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk, we would like your opinion, comments and suggestions regarding the possible ecological, cultural and economic impacts of listing or not listing these populations under the *Species at Risk Act*.

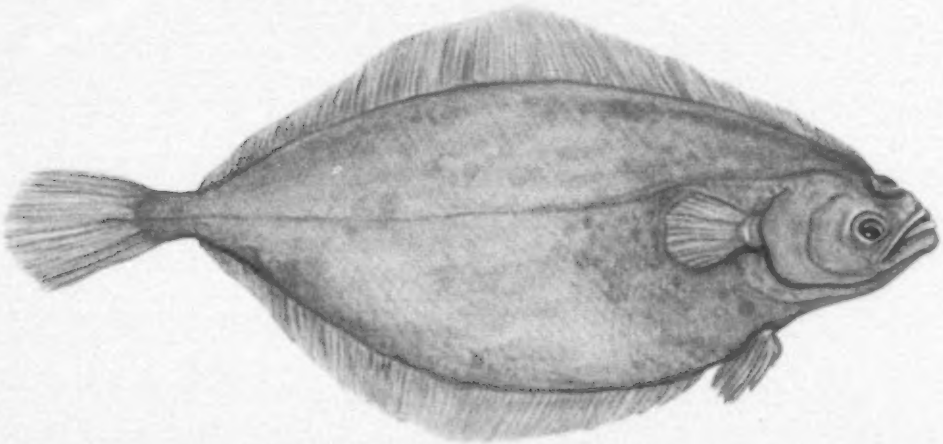
CONSULTATION
on two American Plaice populations

When all distribution and biological data were considered, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada identified three populations of American Plaice: Arctic, Maritime, and Newfoundland and Labrador. However, this document will only focus on Maritime and Newfoundland and Labrador populations, as little is known about the Arctic population and there are insufficient data to determine its status.

FACTS
on American Plaice

American Plaice, a relatively slow growing fish, has a uniquely flattened body. When a young plaice emerges from its egg, it has a typical fish shape. During its development, once the plaice has settled on the bottom of the ocean, the side of its body becomes flattened and its left eye migrates to the right side of the body, allowing the plaice to swim on its side. The upper side (where both eyes are now located) is colored in a way that camouflages the plaice in the sediment. In American Plaice, both eyes are almost always found on the right side of the body.

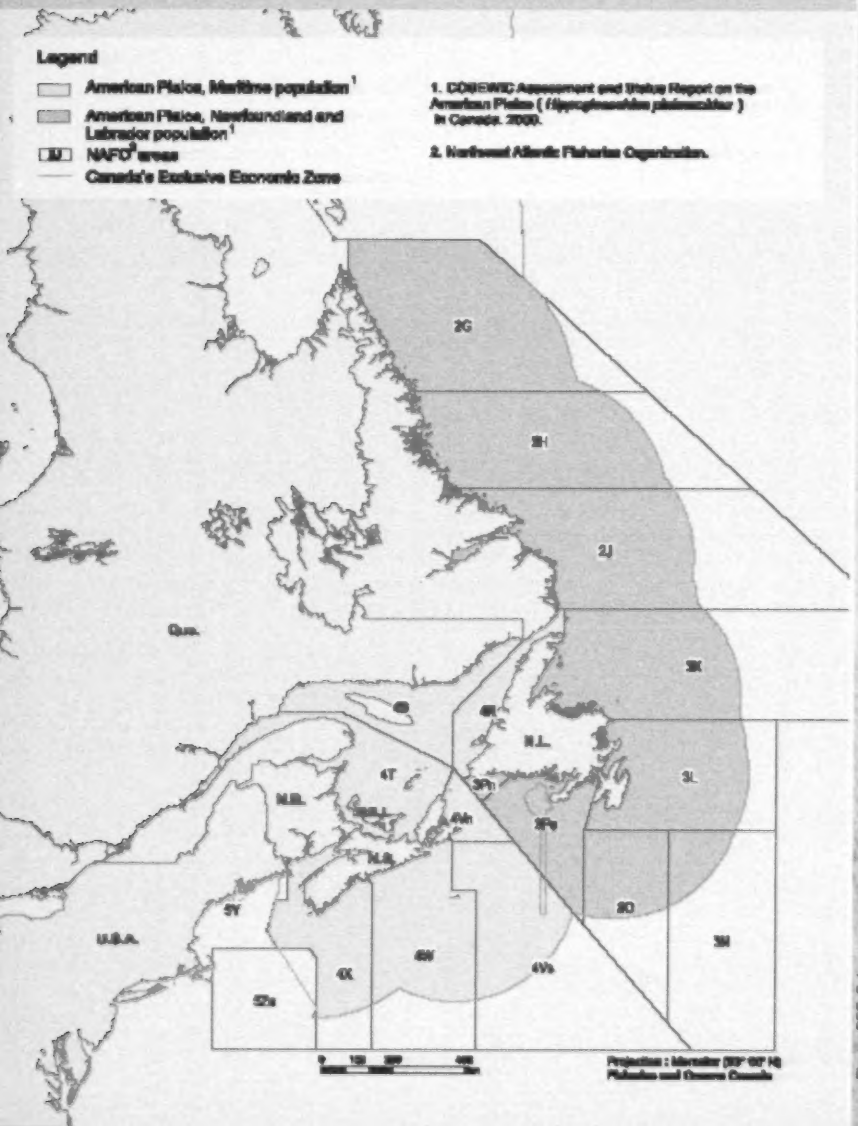
At one time, American Plaice was probably one of the most abundant flatfish in the Northwest Atlantic and was one of the major commercially exploited groundfish species in Canadian fisheries.



POPULATION (NAFO AREAS)	COSEWIC STATUS	DECLINE IN ADULT ABUNDANCE (OVER THE PAST THREE GENERATIONS, I.E. 48 YEARS)
Maritime (4RSTVWX)	**Threatened**	67-86%
Newfoundland and Labrador (2+3KLNOPsPr)	**Threatened**	94-96%

Map of American Plaice populations (designatable units) under consultation

(by Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) areas)

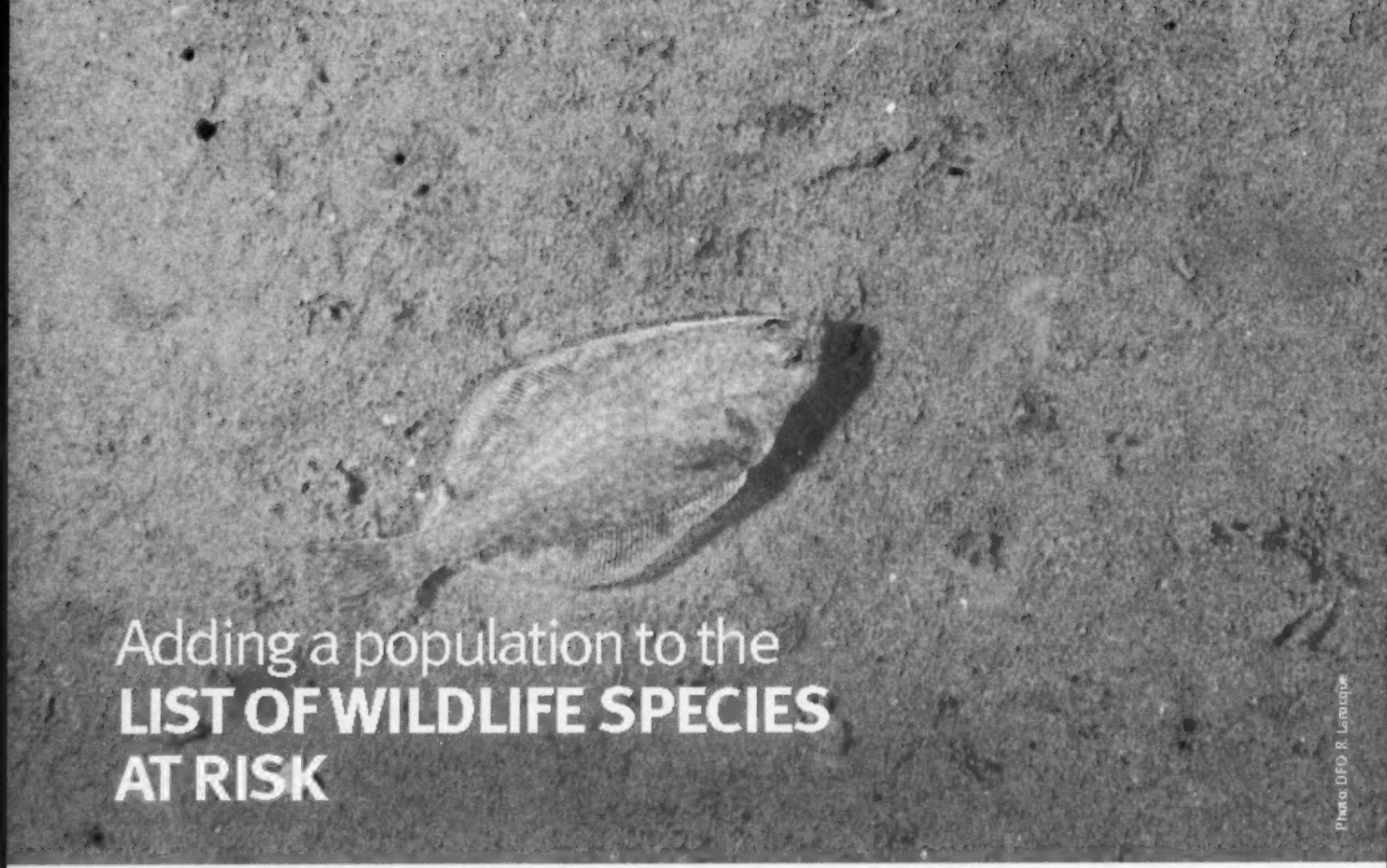


Why are these POPULATIONS of American Plaice at risk?

Using the best available information, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada has determined that:

- Overfishing is thought to be responsible for the decline of American Plaice.
- Fishing, directed or bycatch, likely poses a threat to American Plaice populations.
- In recent decades, increased natural mortality, thought to be caused by predation and unfavorable environmental conditions, appears to be a major cause in the failure of the stocks to recover significantly even with reduced fishing.

Photo: DFO, R. Larocque



Adding a population to the **LIST OF WILDLIFE SPECIES AT RISK**

Photo: DFO R. Lamarque

The process of listing a species under the *Species at Risk Act* consists of several steps. It begins with an assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and ends with a government of Canada decision whether or not to add a species to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk. Consultations are conducted to gather the views of Canadians and are an important step in this process.

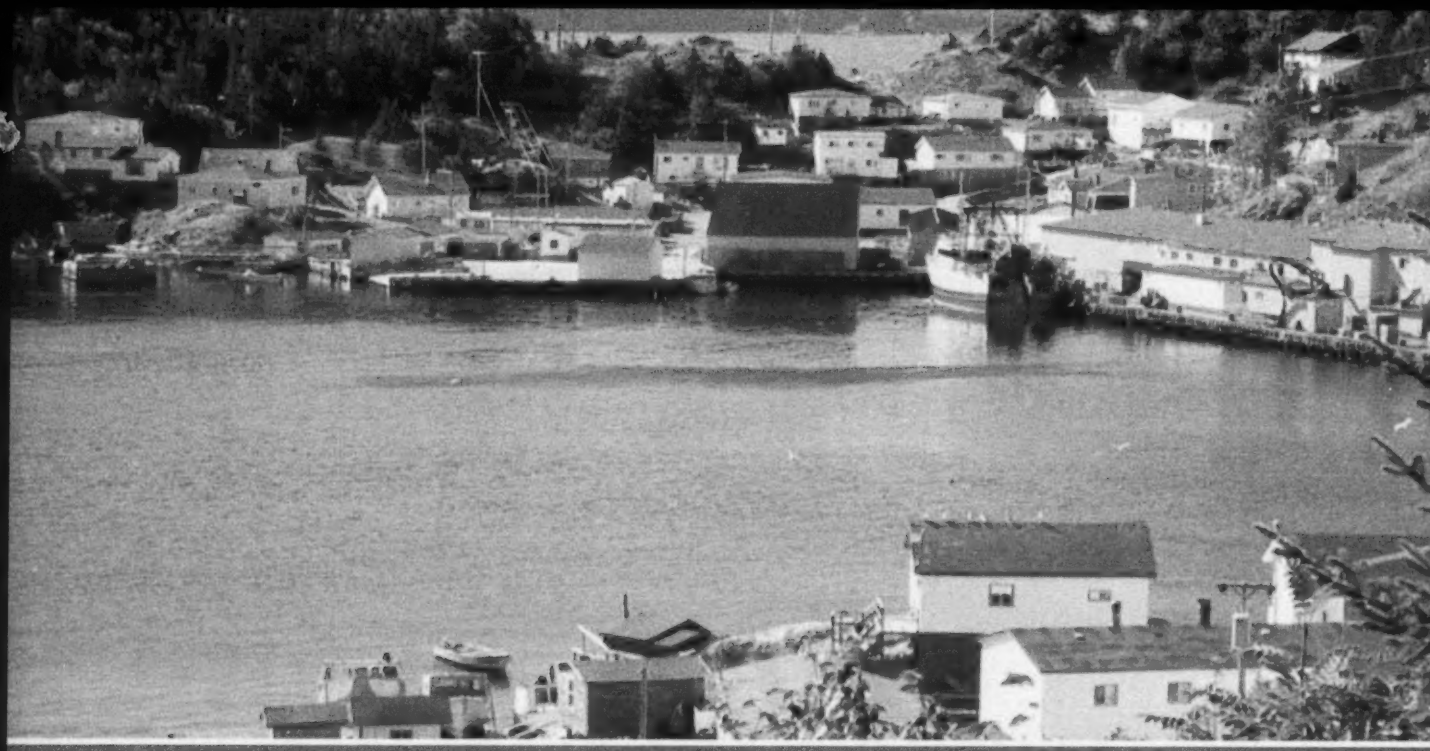
Who assigned a threatened status to these populations of American Plaice?

COSEWIC is an independent committee of experts that assesses and designates which wildlife species are in danger of disappearing from Canada. The status of several American Plaice populations in Canada was assessed in 2009. This assessment was based on the best available information, which includes scientific data, community knowledge and Aboriginal traditional knowledge, where available.

If a population is listed...

A recovery strategy will be developed to identify threats and measures to be implemented to address these threats. Automatic prohibitions will also apply. It will be illegal to kill, harm, harass, take, possess, capture, buy, sell or trade American Plaice from these populations. Critical habitat - the habitat necessary for the survival and recovery of American Plaice - will be protected.

For a copy of the COSEWIC American Plaice Assessment and Status Report or other information, visit the **Species at Risk Public Registry:**
www.sararegistry.gc.ca



ANSWERS TO A FEW of your questions

Why list these American Plaice populations?

According to the COSEWIC, these populations have declined considerably and are now considered threatened. The prohibitions that would be implemented under the *Species at Risk Act* would offer added protection for these populations. Listing would also initiate recovery planning with key partners.

Would the directed commercial American Plaice fishery continue if these populations were listed?

If these populations of American Plaice were added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk, directed American Plaice commercial fisheries would be prohibited.

What would happen if I captured American Plaice while fishing other groundfish species?

Bycatch or retention of American Plaice may be allowed under certain conditions (e.g. any bycatch may need to be released back into the water in the best possible condition). However, it would be prohibited to buy, sell or trade American Plaice from these populations.

Would I be able to continue recreational fishing of American Plaice if these populations were listed?

If these populations of American Plaice are added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk, recreational fishing of American Plaice would likely be prohibited.

Would my Aboriginal community be able to continue to fish American Plaice for food, social and ceremonial purposes if these populations were listed?

Under certain conditions, Aboriginal fisheries for food, social and ceremonial purposes may continue.

Questionnaire

You can make a difference: your comments are important!

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain your comments on adding two American Plaice populations to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk. You may use one questionnaire for all populations or fill out one questionnaire per population.

For more information, go to www.sararegistry.gc.ca.

Please choose the populations you are commenting on:

- ☐ **Maritime**
- ☐ **Newfoundland and Labrador**

1. **Do you support adding one or two American Plaice populations as threatened to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk? Why?**

2. **What would be the positive impacts of listing one or two American Plaice populations on your activities, the community, the environment, the culture and the economy?**

3. **What would be the negative impacts of listing one or more American Plaice populations on your activities, the community, the environment, the culture and economy?**

4. **Do you have any other comments on the listing of one or more populations of American Plaice as threatened?**

5. **If you are answering on behalf of an Aboriginal community or organization, an industry, a small business[1], an association or organization, please specify which one.**

6. **In what province or territory do you live? In what province or territory does your organization operate?**

Select a province

Your name and contact information (optional):

Thank you for filling out this questionnaire.

To send this questionnaire, click on Submit or save the completed form and send it by email to SARA_LEP@dfo-mpo.gc.ca. You may also print this questionnaire (if necessary, add extra pages) and send it to:

Submit

Director
Species at Risk Program Management
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
200 Kent St.
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0E6

1- Defined as any business, including its affiliates, that has fewer than 100 employees or between $30,000 and $5 million in annual gross revenues.